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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 BUCHAREST 001609

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EUR/NCE - JMESSENGER, EUR/PPD - WALKER, EB/IFD  
STATE PASS USTR FOR LERRION  
TREASURY FOR STUART  
USDOC FOR 4232/ITA/MAC/EUR/OEERIS/CEEB/BURGESS/KIMBALL  
STATE PASS USAID/OFDA FOR CHRISTINE GOTTSCHALK  
GENEVA FOR UN/OCHA, IFRCS  
USEUCOM FOR ECJ4-ID

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SUBJECT: ROMANIAN FLOOD UPDATE

REF: A. BUCHAREST 01031

[1B](#). BUCHAREST 01505

[1C](#). BUCHAREST 01584

1) SUMMARY: Romania's summer of flood disasters has resulted in 30 deaths, left thousands homeless, caused extensive damage to roads and bridges, interrupted electricity and gas networks, submerged prime agricultural land, and produced approximately \$2 billion in damage. The GOR has reacted to the latest round, allocating \$85.8 million in assistance to the affected counties. International aid has also begun to roll in, with the European Commission seeking to reprogram several existing funds and bilateral assistance already arriving from other countries. We responded with assistance to the earlier affected areas in the west and south, and are examining ways to respond to the latest disaster in the east.  
END SUMMARY.

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SUMMER OF FLOODS  
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2) Three separate floods have hit Romania since April 21, 2005, leaving 34 of 42 counties under water at one point or another. The first disaster was declared on April 28, 2005 (reftel A). Rural communities in the affected region in western Romania near the Serbian border, which was visited by the former Charge d'Affaires, ECON and USAID five weeks ago, are still overwhelmed by the flooding. This first emergency produced one death and an estimated \$600 million in damage in the seven most severely affected counties: Arad, Bihor, Caras-Severin, Hunedoara, Mehedinti, Suceava and Timis. OFDA (\$50,000) and USAID/Romania (\$500,000) assistance targeted the hardest hit counties of Timis and Arad.

3) During July 1-4, 2005, heavy rains struck fourteen counties in the southern part of Romania: Arad, Arges, Bistrita-Nasaud, Constanta, Dolj, Giurgiu, Gorj, Hunedoara, Olt, Prahova, Teleorman, Tulcea, Valcea and Vrancea. The floods resulted in six deaths, and damages are still being calculated. Following the chief of mission's disaster declaration on July 5 (reftel B), OFDA approved a second \$50,000 in humanitarian assistance and relief supplies to Olt County, the hardest hit.

4) Heavy rains in Moldavia in the eastern part of the country from July 9 through the present have generated serious flooding in 32 counties: Alba, Arad, Arges, Bacau, Bihor, Bistrita-Nasaud, Braila, Brasov, Calarasi, Cluj, Constanta, Covasna, Dolj, Galati, Giurgiu, Gorj, Harghati, Hunedoara, Ialomita, Mehedinti, Neamt, Olt, Prahova, Salaj, Sibiu, Suceava, Teleorman, Tulcea, Valcea and Vrancea. To date, 23 people have died and early estimates of damages amount to \$1.2 billion. The most recent floods have brought the total number of dead to 30 and total flood damage to around \$2 billion. With more rain on the way, flooding will continue to cause humanitarian disasters throughout the summer. Already, 450,000 hectares of agricultural land, representing nearly five percent of the total, have been affected, amounting to damages of 130 to 140 million Euro.

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RAINS UNRELENTING  
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5) The latest statistics on the currently affected counties are:

-- Alba County: 42 localities affected, 415 houses damaged or destroyed, 1,528 ha of agricultural land inundated, 343 people evacuated, 1 dead;

-- Bacau County: 33 localities affected, 6,134 houses damaged or destroyed, 4,448 ha of agricultural land inundated, 1,360 people evacuated, 3 dead;

-- Braila: 3 localities affected and 500 houses damaged or destroyed;

-- Galati: 18 localities affected, 1,622 houses damaged or destroyed, 8,642 ha of agricultural land inundated, 5,286 people evacuated, 2 dead;  
-- Mehedinti: 20 localities affected, 340 houses damaged or destroyed, 2,660 ha of agricultural land inundated;  
-- Suceava: 12 localities affected, 39 houses damaged or destroyed, 388 ha of agricultural land inundated, 1 person missing.  
-- Teleorman: 19 localities affected, 820 houses damaged or destroyed, 2 dead;  
-- Vrancea: 41 localities affected, 1,798 houses damaged or destroyed, 2,395 ha of agricultural land inundated, 1 person missing, 12 deceased.

Most of the affected areas are rural with an older and poor population. Forty percent of the rural population is over the age of fifty and thirty-eight percent of the rural population lives below the poverty line on less than \$1 a day. The local authorities are not prepared to respond to the flood disaster and have very little equipment necessary to assist the affected population.

6) The scope of the disaster is placing great pressure on the GOR to loosen its IMF-imposed budgetary constraints. The GOR already plans to allocate \$85.8 million for all affected counties, with an additional \$15 million in a special reserve fund as necessary. Additionally, \$336.6 million will be allocated to rebuild infrastructure and public buildings destroyed by flooding. This amount includes a pledge to affected farmers of \$57.2 per ha. All families of deceased will receive \$1,009 per family in assistance.

7) Other donors are also responding. The UNDP has pledged \$130,000 in financial assistance to the affected areas to purchase 14 motorboats. They are expected to offer another \$100,000 in the near future. The European Commission has agreed to reprogram some existing funds for the redevelopment of infrastructure affected by the floods. According to the GOR, Hungary, Poland, Switzerland, Israel and Canada have also pledged assistance. Neither has the private sector remained silent, with the American Chamber of Commerce spearheading an assistance drive among its members.

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THE EMBASSY RESPONSE  
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8) USAID/OFDA has already targeted humanitarian assistance and relief supplies to victims of the first two floods in Timis and Olt Counties in the amount of \$100,000. In addition USAID Romania is providing \$500,000 in micro-lending assistance in Timis and Arad Counties. However, Embassy Bucharest believes the most recent wave of floods in the eastern regions necessitates a new response. As the timing of the latest disaster will make it impossible to re-seed affected cropland, relief requirements may continue into the winter. Romania is likely to experience more flooding over the course of the summer, and Embassy Bucharest is considering ways to re-allocate our resources to respond to the pressing need (septel to follow).

TAPLIN